2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AN50 Badaga AN50

1900 or a little before, thatch was replaced by tiled rooves which were considered more convenient, safe and prestigeful; and the Kotas do not generally lay tiles.

For at least the past century Badagas and Kotas have been building their houses of locally made bricks. Kota bricklayers have built Badaga houses, and Badaga bricklayers have also built Kota houses. In either case the traditional ties are not necessarily involved, if only because so very few Badagas or Kotas can lay bricks properly. In these situations payment is generally made in cash according to recognized rates for the labour performed.

Badaga Products

Apart from the annual grant of grain and cloth to Kotas, their Badaga partners used to give them whatever cattle died. 'All the cattle that die in the villages are carried off by the Kotas, and feasted on by them . . . and at no time do the Kotas thrive so well as when there is a murrain among the herds of the Todas and Badagas' (Metz, 1864, 128).

Although Badagas and Todas used to exchange cattle on occasion, no such trade ever took place between Kotas and Badagas; indeed until the mid-nineteenth century the other communities would not allow Kotas to own any buffaloes, and after they did have some they still did not milk them (Reclus, 1891: 192; Thurston, 1909, vol. IV, 7). The Kotas would eat every Badaga or Toda buffalo that died, however, or would kill and eat an aging beast (normally a bull) given them for the purpose; but it is noteworthy that once they started keeping herds they would never eat any of their own buffalo carcasses.[8]

Another item for which the Kotas looked to the Badagas in the last century was opium. Good quality opium was produced on the Nilgiris at that time, but the Badagas seem to have held a monopoly on it. Today anyone can buy poppy capsules illicitly in the town markets (Thurston, 1909, vol. IV, 9).

Irregular Services

There are certain services which Kotas are called upon to render only when some unusual situation arises. Thus Kotas do not normally help their Badaga partners to harvest the crops; but if a

118 241 just as much as the potato had. For our study of change it is significant that tea, coffee and cinchona, like the potato, presuppose a market beyond the Nilgiris. The plantation crops called for more expertise than Badagas could usually manage, and so were largely confined to European land-holdings; even so, some Badagas were [651] growing tea in the late 1920's. But potatoes were relatively easy for Badagas to grow, especially as a government farm in the District helped them with seeds, fertilizers and advice. During the past 40 years some of the more enterprising Badagas have also successfully managed to cultivate tea and coffee in areas both small and large:

[249] > The cultivation of tea by Badagas is increasing very rapidly. The fact that the value of land rises after tea is planted plays an important part in the popularisation of tea growing... In the Salarda valley, there is a Badaga woman who is developing seed-beds of tea on quite a large scale and there are many Badagas who are cultivating excellent nurseries. (Ranga 1934: 18-19)

241 242 Chemical fertilizers were first used by a few Badagas in the early 1920's; before that only cow-dung and human refuse had been available (Grigg 1880: 468; Ranga 1934: 14). The use of these new chemicals was of great importance, for it led to much higher yields in the new vegetable crops and so helped confirm Badagas in the belief that growing food for the market was a really profitable occupation. Insecticides and improved seeds, particularly potatoes, were also willingly accepted by the growers.

241 Improvements in the areas of fertilizer, insecticide and seed were followed almost immediately by the construction of terraces on some of the sloping fields. Progress in terracing was much slower than in the adoption of the other innovations, however, because it demanded a much greater capital outlay than most farmers could afford (Grigg 1880: 470). Even today many cultivated slopes that badly need terracing because of soil erosion still remain to be terraced. In the past few years the situation

618 Thoraiyas to virtually remain serfs, despite outside job opportunities. Female and male Thoraiyas continue to work on Badaga landholdings and serve in Badaga homes. Thoraiya males trained, for example, to be barbers, blacksmiths, brickmakers, carpenters, or washermen, have further served the Badagas. For their services, Thoraiyas are paid in cash and in kind. At periodic intervals and upon special occasions, such as Thoraiya weddings, presents are imparted by Badaga masters.

175 241 Plants exploited by the Badagas. A representative list of plants grown by the Badagas in the early 1800s is obtained from the writings of Keys and Harkness (Table III). Millet species were apparently the main subsistence cereals, but it is worth noting that barley and wheat were also raised. Plants grown commercially at that time were fenugreek (Trigonella foenum-graecum L.), garlic, mustard, 175 249 and poppies (Harkness 1832: 138). Poppy juice, the source of salable opium, was extracted by women and children. Iron nails were used to scratch poppy capsules in the evenings, and gummy exudations were collected on following mornings. Capsules thus scratched every four 175 276 days eventually died. Opium slowly obtained in this fashion was eaten and not smoked. Seeds collected from dead capsules were sold after sun-drying, and by boiling remaining capsule shells in water a stupefying beverage was obtained (Francis 1908: 290-291; Metz 1864: 153; 439 Ward 1821: lxiii). According to Metz (1864: 153), fenugreek was sold (651) to low country merchants; men from Coimbatore bought large quantities of garlic and onions, which were carried down to the plains on bullocks; and mustard seed sale alone was said by the Badagas

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